

TEXT OF TELEGRAM 80SEOUL 016909

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1036
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
SA CINCJWC KS
CHJUSMA3 SEOUL KS
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//BJ-IS
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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E.O. 12958: GDS 12/20/86 (GLEYSTEN, W. H.) DR-M
TAGS: PINT KS
SUBJECT: THE DEMOCRATIC JUSTICE PARTY:
- A PRO-GOVERNMENT PARTY WITH PROBLEMS

1. [REDACTED] (ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: THIS IS THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF IMPRESSIONS OF KOREA'S NASCENT POLITICAL PARTIES. OUR REPORTING MUST BE IMPRESSIONISTIC AT THIS POINT: THE PARTIES THEMSELVES ARE STILL GROPPING FOR IDEOLOGIES AND SUPPORT AS WELL AS TRYING TO SOLVE THE MORE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF ORGANIZING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE DEMOCRATIC JUSTICE PARTY (DJP) SEEMED TO HAVE EVERYTHING GOING FOR IT WHEN IT STARTED: SUPPORT FROM A GOVERNMENT CLEARLY IN CHARGE, A "NEW, PURIFIED" IMAGE, CONSIDERABLE PHYSICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASSETS, AND A BACK-UP PARTY IN THE EVENT THE DJP CANDIDATES RUN INTO TROUBLE. IN REALITY, HOWEVER, THE PARTY FACES SOME SERIOUS OBSTACLES: THE LEADERSHIP IS FOR THE MOST PART INEXPERIENCED AND NAIVE, IT IS HAVING

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TROUBLE DISTANCING ITSELF FROM THE LEGACY OF THE OLD DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICAN PARTY AND EXPLAINING UNPOPULAR ACTIONS BY PRESIDENT CHUN, AND ITS BACK-UP PARTY HAS PROVEN SURPRISINGLY INDEPENDENT. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE DJP CANNOT OVERCOME THESE DRAWBACKS; WE WILL WATCH WITH INTEREST ITS EFFORTS TO DO SO. END SUMMARY.

3. THE DEMOCRATIC JUSTICE PARTY (DJP) WAS CREATED IN AN ATMOSPHERE THAT SEEMED TO AUGER WELL FOR ITS CHANCES OF

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TRB Date 9/13/93

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DOMINATING PARTISAN POLITICS IN KOREA FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS: MOST OF THE MOST CORRUPT POLITICIANS THAT HAD DAMAGED THE IMAGE OF THE DRP, SUCH AS LEE HU RAK (M-R: YI HU-RAK) AND PARK CHONG KYU (M-R: PAK CHONG-KYU), "PISTOL PARK," HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM THE SCENE IN THE "PURIFICATION OF KOREAN POLITICS. IN ADDITION, POLITICIANS ONCE REGARDED AS POSSIBLE PRESIDENTIAL TIMBER, SUCH AS KIM JONG PIL (M-R: KIM CHONG-P'IL) AND CHUNG IL KWON (M-R: CHONG IL-KWON) WERE SHELVED, AND THE PARTY COULD HAVE ITS PICK OF ATTRACTIVE CANDIDATES FROM AMONG BOTH OPPOSITION AND PRO-GOVERNMENT FIGURES. WE SUSPECT THAT THE NUMBER OF POLITICIANS WHO WOULD HAVE REFUSED AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE NEW PARTY AND RUN UNDER ITS BANNER FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS SMALL INDEED. FOR EXAMPLE, EVEN PARK KWON HEON (M-R: PAK KWON-HOM), THE NOP SPOKESMAN WHO WAS BADLY BEATEN BY POLICE DURING LAST YEAR'S Y-H INCIDENT, EMERGED AS ONE OF THE INITIAL PROMOTORS OF THE DJP. FINALLY, THE DJP TOOK OVER THE DRP'S ASSETS, TOTALLING ALMOST 10 BILLION WON, AND PLANNED TO TAKE OVER THE DRP'S LOCAL CHAPTERS PART AND PARCEL.

4. YET THINGS HAVE NOT GONE WELL. PERHAPS THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS HAS BEEN THE PARTY'S FAILURE TO WORK OUT AN IDEOLOGY AND ARTICULATE WHAT THE PARTY STANDS FOR. THE

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PARTY'S MOVERS AND SHAKERS, A SMALL GROUP OF CHUN (M-R: CHON TU-HWAN) LOYALISTS FROM THE MILITARY, RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO DISTANCE THE DJP FROM THE DRP LEGACY, AND FROM THOSE LIKE J.P. KIM AND PRESIDENT PARK (M-R: PAK CHONG-HUI) HIMSELF WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THE DRP. (LEE CHONG CHAN (M-R: YI CHONG-CH'AN), A KMA 16 GRADUATE AND THE DJP OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF PARTY ORGANIZATION, RECENTLY SAID IT IS "INAPPROPRIATE" TO EVEN SPEAK OF THE DJP INHERITING THE DRP LEGACY AND IDEOLOGY; HOWEVER WHEN ASKED FOR EXAMPLES OF HOW THE TWO PARTIES ARE DIFFERENT, HE SAID "THERE ARE NONE.") WHILE THE PARTY LITERALLY HAS NO ALTERNATIVE TO SUPPORTING PRESIDENT CHUN AND HIS POLICIES, THIS NECESSITY MAKES DJP CANDIDATES EASY TARGETS FOR OTHER POLITICIANS EXPLOITING WHAT WE JUDGE IS A WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT WITH THE PRESIDENT AND WITH WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN KOREA DURING THE PAST YEAR. ("IT'S GOING TO BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED IN KWANGJU IN MAY," YOU, KYUN-HYUN (M-R: YU KYUN-HYUN), A DJP POLITICIAN FROM CHOLLA, TOLD US, "BUT HE (POINTING TO CHOI YOUNG CHOUL (M-R: CH'OE YONG-CHOL) FROM MOKP'Ō, KIM DAE JUNG'S (M-R: KIM TAE-CHUNG) HOME TOWN), HAS REAL PROBLEMS.") EVEN THE ACQUISITION OF THE DRP'S ASSETS IS A MIXED BLESSING. THE PARTY DECIDED NOT TO MOVE INTO THE OLD DRP HEADQUARTERS ON NAMSAN TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE IMAGE OF THE OLD GOVERNMENT PARTY; HOWEVER, THE INCONSISTENCY OF DOING SO WHILE AT THE SAME TIME TAKING TITLE TO THE

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BUILDING AND THE OTHER PHYSICAL ASSETS IS NOT LIKELY TO BE
LOST ON KOREANS.

5. THE KOREAN NATIONAL PARTY (KNP), WHICH HAD ORIGINALLY
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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1037
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BEEN DESCRIBED TO US BY DJP MEMBERS AS A "SECOND LINE" (IF THE DJP CANDIDATE IN A GIVEN DISTRICT DID POORLY, THE KNP CANDIDATE WOULD PICK UP LOST VOTES AND SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT) HAS NOT SO FAR MEETLY ACCEPTED THE ROLE SKETCHED OUT FOR IT BY THE DJP. THE KNP LEADERSHIP HAS SAID IT WILL "NOT NECESSARILY SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT QUESTION," AND THE PARTY SEEMS SURE TO GET MANY OF THE VOTES THAT WOULD NORMALLY GO TO THE GOVERNMENT PARTY. THE DJP'S TAKEOVER OF THE OLD DRP CHAPTER ORGANIZATIONS HAS NOT GONE AS SMOOTHLY AS HOPED. FOR EXAMPLE, IN A TAEJU DISTRICT, THE DJP PLANS TO RUN EX-DRP ASSEMBLYMAN HAN BYUNG CHAE (M-R: HAN PYONG-CHAE), BUT THE LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE DEFUNCT DRP, SEEING HAN AS A TURNCOAT, HAS PROVEN TO BE LESS THAN COOPERATIVE. MOST CHAPTER MEMBERS SUPPORT EX-DRP ASSEMBLYMAN LEE MAN SUP (M-R: YI MAN-SUP), WHO IS RUNNING UNDER THE KNP BANNER. THE DJP HAS FACED REALITY IN TAEJU AND NOW SAYS THAT TAEJU CHAPTER MEMBERS CAN DECIDE "ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS" WHOM TO SUPPORT. THE DJP AND ITS CANDIDATES WILL BE SNIPED AT BY A VARIETY OF OPPOSITION PARTIES (ONE DJP MEMBER TOLD US THAT THE OPPOSITION COULD ELECT "ANY

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IDIOT" IN SEOUL AND OTHER MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS). DJP STALWARTS HOPE THAT CANDIDATES FROM VARIOUS OPPOSITION PARTIES WILL DIVIDE THE OPPOSITION VOTE.

6. THE DJP ALSO HAS SOME SERIOUS LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS. THERE ARE SOME VERY BRIGHT, EXPERIENCED POLITICIANS IN THE DJP (LEE TAE SUP (M-R: YI T'AE-SOP) AND NAM JAE HEE (M-R: NAM CHAE-HUI) COME TO MIND), BUT EX-MILITARY MAN AND PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL KWON JONG DAL (M-R: KWON CHONG-TAL)


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STRIKES US AS NAIVE, IDEALISTIC, AND SOMEWHAT LOST IN DEALING WITH THE REALITIES OF GETTING A NEW PARTY OFF THE GROUND.

7. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO CONCLUDE FROM ALL THIS THAT THE DJP IS GOING TO BE IN DEEP TROUBLE DURING THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF PARTIES AND THE ELECTIONS AHEAD. IN ADDITION TO THE ASSETS LISTED PARA 3, THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP, WHILE INEXPERIENCED, INCLUDES SOME FAST LEARNERS WHO WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY ADEPT IN THEIR NEW ROLES. AS THESE LEADERS LEARN TO USE THE DJP'S VAST ADVANTAGES EFFECTIVELY, THE PARTY SHOULD BE ABLE TO COUNTER SOME OF THE WEAKNESSES INHERENT IN ITS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH A REGIME WHOSE POPULARITY IS AS YET UNTRIED. KOREA'S HISTORY OFFERS FEW EXAMPLES OF A GOVERNMENT PARTY LOSING CONTROL OF POLITICS EXCEPT UNDER CONDITIONS OF NEAR CHAOS. GLEYSTEN



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